

# I-15 project a boon for state

Genelle Pugmire - Daily Herald | Posted: Monday, September 20, 2010 12:25 am |

Utah has added 19,000 jobs over this time last year, thanks in large part to a sort of homegrown stimulus: the Interstate 15 CORE project.

"It's a major positive," said Jeff Thredgold, economist for Zions Bank. "It's a form of stimulus in Utah County, and we need some form of stimulus. This is good news for Utah County."

The \$1.72 billion I-15 CORE project is the largest project currently underway in the western United States -- and one of the three largest in the country. Thredgold said that any time you have a large project such as the I-15 CORE project or the City Creek project in Salt Lake City, there are always workers going to lunch, paying rent and supporting other jobs. These are jobs providing incomes that also bring tax revenue.

According to Thredgold, "the negatives are I-15 will be a travel nightmare and a bit of a loss for people spending time on the freeway."

One of the contributing factors for why the Provo River Constructors won the I-15 CORE Project bid was their concern for keeping traffic flowing and less loss of work time for drivers.

"When we bid this project, we wondered what could we do to be different from our competitors," said Scott Risley, deputy project director for PRC. "That was to keep additional lanes going. We were the only ones to offer that."

"What they're saying makes projects more difficult to do, but it makes it more easy for people to travel," Thredgold said. When people are traveling, work is getting done, and the economy feels that.

To keep within budget, it's imperative to use local resources and to hire locally as well, according to CORE project spokeswoman Heather Barnum. Only a few specialized jobs are being filled from outside the state. Barnum said 95 percent of the supplies used in the project are from the state, including nearly 200 trucks purchased from Gus Paulos Chevrolet.

"It's been a big impact for our area and has far reaching affects," said Lary Ravenberg, fleet manager at Gus Paulos. "We've added people here just to take care of their orders. It has a rippling effect for ours and other dealerships." Ravenberg added that for these times, PRC's fleet order is extremely large.

Barnum said she feels strongly that the CORE project is a major contributor in helping Utah come out of the current recession. "It's a light at the end of the freeway," she said. "It's a light with the recovery, it's something that's happening now, creating and sustaining jobs in the state."

While Barnum touts the size of the construction project and numbers of jobs involved, it is the concept of Utah County being a major construction stop in the entire country that is often difficult to conceive. "There are very few major design build projects. This is major, major for the U.S.," she said.

"The project will look to double the number of good paying jobs needed by next summer in a variety of skill sets from management to craftsman," Barnum said.

Barnum suggested that those looking for employment should freshen up their résumés and keep watching; the I-15 CORE project will continue to hire in the coming months for the next big push this coming spring.

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